Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties number: PG: 74B-1 & AA-851

Name: Governor's Bridge Rd. over Patuxent River

The bridge referenced herein was inventoried by the Maryland State Highway Administration as part of the Historic Bridge Inventory, and SHA provided the Trust with eligibility determinations in February 2001. The Trust accepted the Historic Bridge Inventory on April 3, 2001. The bridge received the following determination of eligibility.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility Recommended ___X___ Eligibility Not Recommended _____

Criteria: ___A ___B ___X___C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G ___None

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Reviewer, OPS: Anne E. Bruder _____ Date: 3 April 2001

Reviewer, NR Program: Peter E. Kurtze _____ Date: 3 April 2001

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BRIDGES MHT No. PG 74B-1 & AA-851
HISTORIC BRIDGE INVENTORY
MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION/
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

SHA Bridge No. P-599 Bridge name Governor's Bridge Road over Patuxent River or Governor's Bridge

LOCATION:
Street/Road name and number [facility carried] Governor's Bridge Road

City/town Bowie Vicinity X

County Prince George's

This bridge projects over: Road ____ Railway ____ Water X Land ____

Ownership: State ____ County X Municipal ____ Other ____

HISTORIC STATUS:
Is bridge located within a designated historic district? Yes ____ No X
National Register-listed district ____ National Register-determined-eligible district ____
Locally-designated district ____ Other ____
Name of district ____

BRIDGE TYPE:
Timber Bridge ____:
Beam Bridge ____ Truss -Covered ____ Trestle ____ Timber-And-Concrete ____

Stone Arch Bridge ____

Metal Truss Bridge X

Movable Bridge ____:
Swing ____ Bascule Single Leaf ____ Bascule Multiple Leaf ____
Vertical Lift ____ Retractile ____ Pontoon ____

Metal Girder ____:
Rolled Girder ____ Rolled Girder Concrete Encased ____
Plate Girder ____ Plate Girder Concrete Encased ____

Metal Suspension ____

Metal Arch ____

Metal Cantilever ____

Concrete ____:
Concrete Arch ____ Concrete Slab ____ Concrete Beam ____ Rigid Frame ____

Other ____ Type Name ____

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DESCRIPTION:

Describe Setting:

Bridge P-599 is designed to carry one lane of traffic on Governor's Bridge Road over the Patuxent River, connecting Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County. Governor's Bridge Road runs in a generally west-east direction at this location and the Patuxent River flows north to south. The bridge is situated just south of Bowie in Prince George's County, Maryland.

The site of the bridge has been used as a crossing since the mid-eighteenth century. The name is believed to date from that period, when Governor Ogle utilized a predecessor bridge to travel from his Belair estate across the Patuxent to Annapolis. It is not known how many bridges have spanned the Patuxent at this point. One is known to have been in place in 1878, according to G.M. Hopkins' *Atlas of Prince George's County* of that year.

Describe Superstructure and Substructure:

This structure a single-span, steel, Pratt through-truss bridge measuring 115' in length with 13'-7" in clear roadway width. Each of its six panels measures 19'-2". The top chords, bottom chords, and end posts are back to back channels with top cover plates. The first and last vertical members are angle shaped. All of the other vertical members are I-shaped. All diagonal members are angle shapes. The bearings of the bridge at the east end are secured with pinned connections. The trusses on each side have a steel lattice safety railing. The bridge is set upon a substructure of coursed stone and concrete abutments.

Discuss Major Alterations:

The original timber deck has been replaced by an open grate steel deck. When the bridge was surveyed in 1995, it was closed to traffic. However, it has since been re-opened, although no significant alterations are evident.

HISTORY:

WHEN was bridge built (actual date or date range) c.1907-1912
This date is: Actual _____ **Estimated** X
Source of date: Plaque _____ **Design plans** _____ **County bridge files/inspection form** _____
Other (specify) Survey forms on file at the Maryland Historical Trust give a date range for construction of about 1907 to 1912

WHY was bridge built? To provide a reliable crossing of Governor's Bridge Road over the Patuxent River, to meet local and regional transportation needs. Prior to the establishment of MD 50 early in the century, this was a major route to Annapolis.

WHO was the designer _____

WHO was the builder _____

WHY was bridge altered? [check N/A X **if not applicable]**

Was bridge built as part of organized bridge-building campaign? Yes _____ **No** X

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SURVEYOR/HISTORIAN ANALYSIS:

This bridge may have National Register significance for its association with:
A - Events _X_ B- Person _____
C- Engineering/architectural character _X_
Was bridge constructed in response to significant events in Maryland or local history? No_ Yes X
If yes, what event?

This bridge was one of a large number of metal truss bridges erected in Maryland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These bridges, which were stronger and more reliable than the majority of their predecessors, were part of a major advance in bridge technology in Maryland and throughout the nation in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

When the bridge was built and/or given a major alteration, did it have a significant impact on the growth & development of the area? No ____ Yes X

Because of their solidity, metal truss bridges such as the Governor's Bridge Road bridge provided reliable crossings, largely free from the dangers of floods and other disasters that regularly destroyed many of their predecessors. By assuring travelers that Governor's Bridge Road could be safely and reliably passed throughout the year, this bridge promoted small-scale residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial development along the road and other thoroughfares that fed into it. It also facilitated traffic to and from the capital to Prince George's County. Though their impacts were generally localized, bridges such as this, taken *en masse*, were an important factor in the development of rural areas throughout the state.

Is the bridge located in an area which may be eligible for historic designation? No X Yes _____
Would the bridge add to___or detract from ___ historic & visual character of the possible district?

Is the bridge a significant example of its type? No _____ Yes _X_____

Between 1840 and the Civil War, under the impetus of a rapidly expanding railroad system, the majority of early American metal truss bridge forms were patented and introduced. In Maryland, the earliest metal truss bridges carried rail lines, which required their great strength and reliability. From the War through the end of the century, metal truss technology was improved, steel began to replace iron, and the use of trusses was expanded to carry roads as well as rail lines.

Numerous metal truss bridges were erected in Baltimore, the original hub of the metal truss in the state, from the 1850s through the 1880s. From Baltimore, the use of the metal truss spread out to other parts of the state, particularly the Piedmont and Appalachian Plateau. Many bridge and iron works were established in the eastern United States to design and fabricate truss members, which were then shipped to sites in Maryland and elsewhere to be erected. More than 15 different bridge companies located in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, and Indiana are known to have shipped metal truss bridges to sites throughout Maryland. Bridges were first fabricated in Maryland, and shipped to sites within the state and beyond, by the companies of seminal bridge designer Wendel Bollman.

Early in the twentieth century, concrete bridges began to compete with metal truss bridges throughout the state at small to moderate crossings. With the development of uniform standards for concrete bridges by the State Roads Commission in the 1910s, the construction of smaller metal truss bridges significantly declined throughout the state. The metal truss still remained the bridge of choice for large crossings, however. In the 1920s, heavier members began to be used at these bridges. Reflecting even heavier load requirements and increased lengths, metal truss bridges erected in the state in the 1930s and 1940s were heavy and solid, rather than light and delicate like their late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century predecessors.

PG: 74B-1 + AA-851

Numerous Pratt truss bridges were erected throughout the country between 1844, when the type was patented by Thomas and Caleb Pratt, and the early twentieth century. The Pratt has diagonals extended across one panel in tension and verticals in compression, except for hip verticals immediately adjacent to the inclined end posts of the bridge. The large majority of Maryland's surviving metal truss bridges are Pratts, built as through or pony trusses either riveted or pin-connected.

This bridge was erected during one of the three key periods (1840-1860, 1860-1900, and 1900-1960) of bridge construction in Maryland. Built between about 1907 and 1912, it falls within the period 1900-1960. During this era, metal truss highway bridges became increasingly standardized. Also during this period, smaller and moderate length trusses were gradually replaced by reinforced concrete structures, and the modern metal girder bridge, which could easily be widened, replaced the metal truss bridge at all but the largest approaches and crossings. Built early in the century, it is characterized by relatively delicate members, rather the heavy solid members that characterize its successors.

Does bridge retain integrity [in terms of National Register] of important elements described in Context Addendum? No ____ Yes __X__ It retains its integrity of its character-defining elements.

Is bridge a significant example of work of manufacturer, designer and/or engineer? No__ Yes _____
This bridge has been surveyed at least four times, but neither a manufacturer, designer, nor engineer has been identified.

Should bridge be given further study before significance analysis is made? No X____ Yes _____

It is believed that no further evaluation is necessary to determine the eligibility of this bridge for listing in the National Register. However, additional research, which could be conducted as part of any future National Register nomination prepared for the bridge, might provide further information about its history and environs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bridge inspection reports and files of the Prince George's County engineer's office.

County survey files of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Hopkins, G.M. *Atlas of Prince George's County*. 1878.

Jackson, Donald H. *Great American Bridges and Dams*. Washington, D.C: The Preservation Press, 1968

P.A.C. Spero & Company. *Historic Bridges in Maryland: Historic Context Report*. Prepared for the Maryland State Highway Administration, September, 1994.

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. *Historic Highway Bridges in Pennsylvania*. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1986.

State inventory form AA-851 for Anne Arundel County

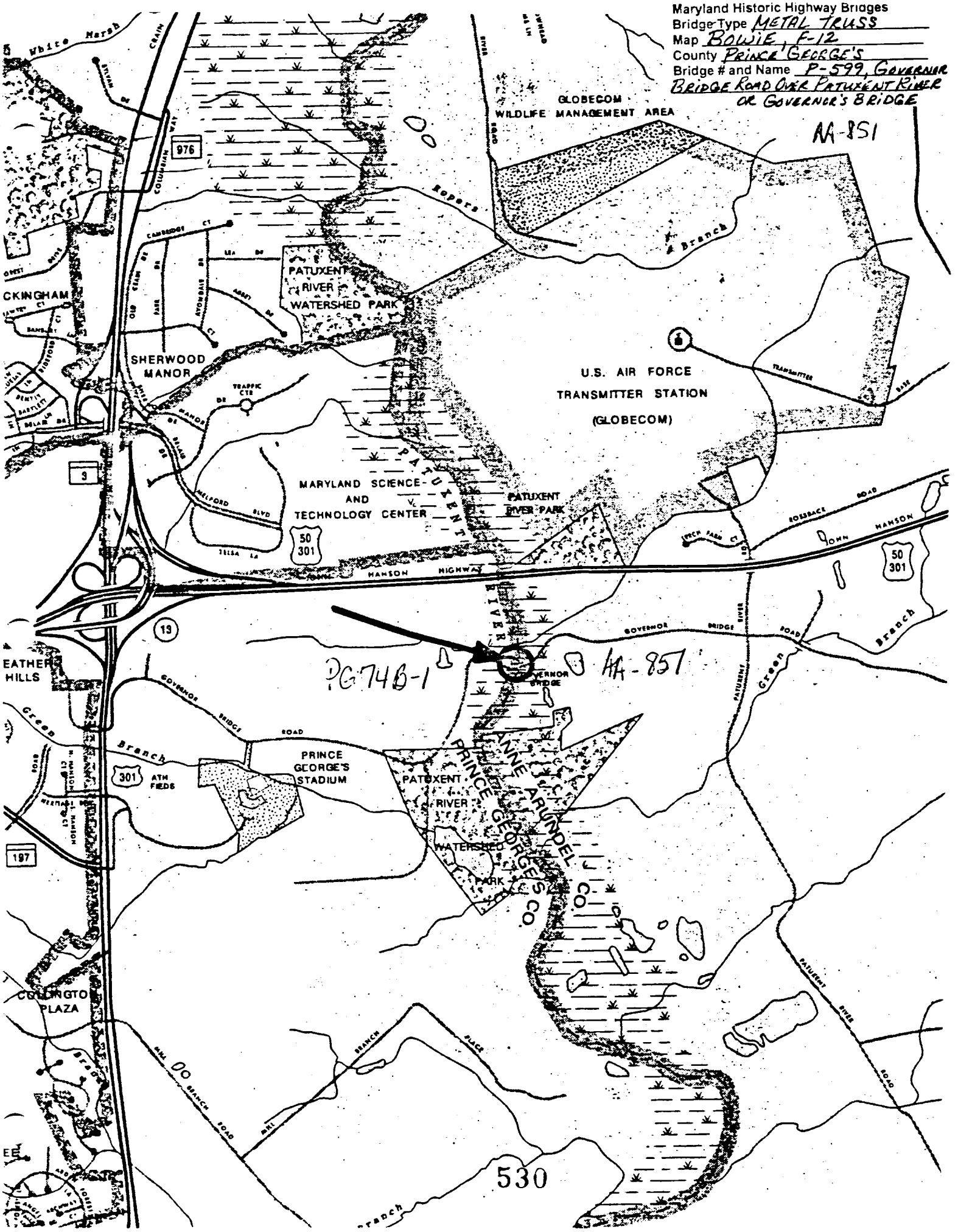
State inventory form 74B-1 for Prince George's County

PG:74B-1 + AA-857

SURVEYOR/SURVEY INFORMATION:

Date bridge recorded 1/95

Name of surveyor Walter King/Marvin Brown
Organization/Address GREINER, INC., 2219 York Road, Suite 200, Timonium, Maryland 21093-3111
Phone number 410-561-0100 **FAX number** 410-561-1150
revised by P.A.C. Spero & Company, August 1998


Maryland Historic Highway Bridges
Bridge Type METAL TRUSS
Map BOWIE, F-12
County PRINCE GEORGE'S
Bridge # and Name P-599, GOVERNOR BRIDGE ROAD OVER PATUXENT RIVER OR GOVERNOR'S BRIDGE
AA-851
GLOBECOM WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
PATUXENT RIVER WATERSHED PARK
SHERWOOD MANOR
U.S. AIR FORCE TRANSMITTER STATION (GLOBECOM)
MARYLAND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER
PATUXENT RIVER PARK
HANSON HIGHWAY
GOVERNOR BRIDGE ROAD
PRINCE GEORGE'S STADIUM
PATUXENT RIVER WATERSHED PARK
PRINCE GEORGE'S CO.
ANNE ARUNDEL CO.
PG-74B-1
AA-851
530

Survey No. AA-851
P6-74B-1
Magi No. 0208515717

DOE __yes __no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic GOVERNOR'S BRIDGE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Governor Bridge Road over Patuxent River ___ **not for publication**

city, town Davidsonville ___ **vicinity of** 7th **congressional district**

state Maryland **county** Anne Arundel

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	_X_ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
_X_ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	_X_ transportation
	_X_ not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Anne Arundel and Prince George's County Roads Departments

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Anne Arundel County Courthouse liber

street & number South Street folio

city, town Annapolis **state** MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ **federal** ___ **state** ___ **county** ___ **local**

depository for survey records

city, town **state**

7. Description

Survey No. AA-851

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	_X_ unaltered	_X_ original site
_X_ good	___ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Governor's Bridge is a single span, iron truss bridge of Pratt design which spans the Patuxent River on Governor Bridge Road in the northern half of Davidsonville, Maryland.

The single lane bridge is set upon coursed random stone and concrete abutments, is 14 feet 3 inches wide and 117 feet in length. The deck is of steel grid which apparently replaced a wooden deck. The joints of the bridge at the eastern end are secured with pinned connections. A name plate could not be found. A year of 1907 was provided by the Maryland Historical Trust as the date of construction. Since no welds are visible, the structure predates 1917 when welding was in common use.

The bridge is in good condition, although one pin on the northeast end appears to be working loose. It is presently painted a light blue.

8. Significance

Survey No. AA-851

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion	
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science	
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture	
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian	
___ 1700–1799	___ art	X engineering	___ music	___ theater	
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	X transportation	
X 1900–	___ communications	X industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)	
		___ invention			

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: __A __B __C __D
and/or
Applicable Exception: __A __B __C __D __E __F __G

Level of Significance: __national __state __local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Governor's Bridge, erected by 1760[1], was known as Patuxent Bridge. The site has been used as a crossing since the mid 18th century. A ford to the north of the bridge was used by Governor Ogle to travel from Belair Mansion to Annapolis via what is now known as Governor Bridge Road. Although an exact date for the first bridge (Patuxent Bridge) cannot be found, research by Carville V. Earle provides an accurate estimation: "... bridge building over the Patuxent became contagious. Between 1744 and 1773, the Anne Arundel Court made agreements for the construction of not less than sixteen bridges over the Patuxent, north of Queen Anne's."[2] Also from the same source is a reference by Rochefoucault in Travels Through The United States: "notwithstanding the inconveniency of three passages over rivers which I could have avoided by taking that of Bladensburg via Governors Bridge."[3] This was written in the 1790's.

The current bridge utilizes the Pratt truss, which became the most popular bridge design in the last third of the 19th century. Prior to its use for road bridges, the Pratt truss was developed and evolved for use in railroad bridges. According to Carl Condit of Northwestern University: "The building of truss bridges had an impact far beyond the railroads. Had it not been for the development of truss and iron-girder bridges, the birth of the iron and steel framed skyscraper would have been greatly delayed ... without question, the single greatest factor in the development of iron and steel technology was the railroads. The building of truss and girder bridges greatly stimulated iron and steel metallurgy, fabrication and design methods ... In fact, some of the bridge-truss concepts were applied in the design of buildings ... For instance, the roof of the Auditorium Building in Chicago (1889) was supported by trusses."[4]

At one time there were over twenty companies manufacturing iron truss bridges represented in the Maryland and Virginia area. Usually once a community had determined the need for a bridge, the County Commissioners advertised for bids in the local newspaper. A particular bridge design or style was chosen from a book of designs by the manufacturing company and a bid was submitted.[5]

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. AA-851

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name Bowie **Quadrangle scale** 7.5 min.

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	Zone	Easting	Northing	B	Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Governor Bridge at Patuxent River, Anne Arundel County, Maryland
76 degrees west 42 minutes 40 seconds, 38 degrees 57 minutes north.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Davidsonville Survey Group		
organization	Davidsonville Area Civic Association	**date**	11/17/83
street & number	1521 Themes Drive	**telephone**	798-6145
city or town	Davidsonville	**state**	MD 21035

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

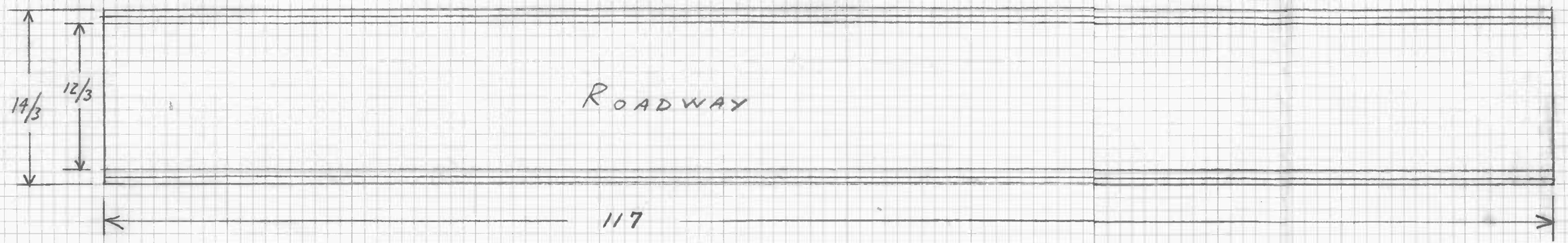
return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

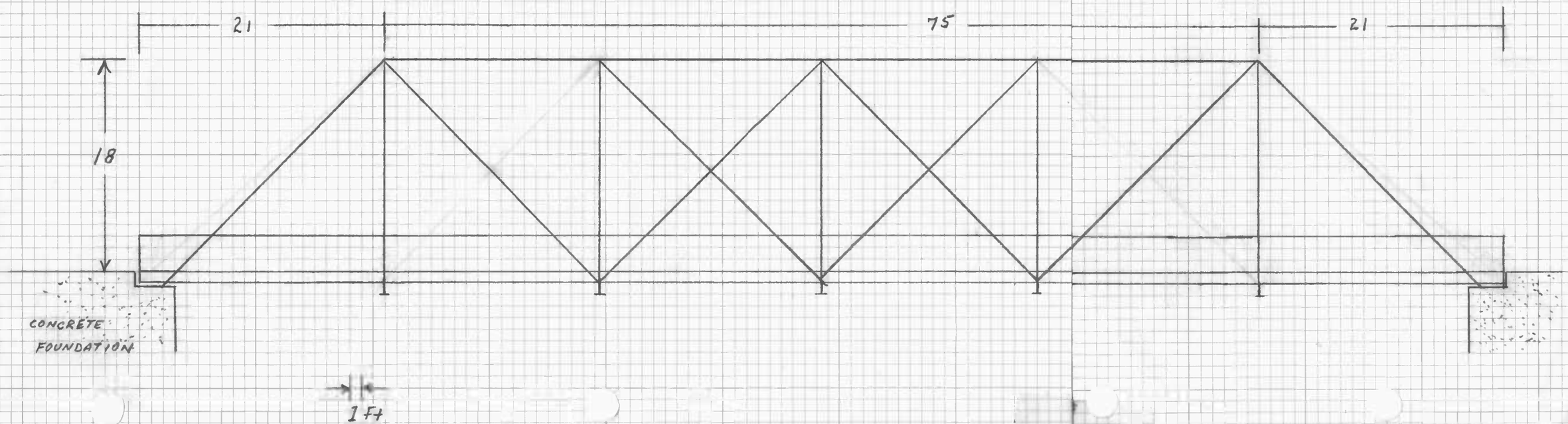
#8. Continuation sheet, page 2

1. Earle, The Evolution Of A Tidewater Settlement System, p. 156.
2. Ibid., p. 153.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
4. Jackson, Civil Engineering-ASCE, Oct. 1977, Railroads, Truss Bridges And The Rise of The Civil Engineer, pp. 97-101.
5. Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form For State Historic Sites Survey (Gapland Road Bridge) F-2-3, 1101093617.

AA-851

GOVERNOR'S BRIDGE






ROBERT

AA-851

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